
Education for Y'all: global neoliberalism and the case for a politics of scale in sustainability education policy

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ABSTRACT This article addresses the effects of neoliberalism as it operates through global and local educational policy, and in particular in relation to the United Nations' Education for Sustainable Development initiatives. It examines how a politics of scale is necessary in enabling critique and in rearticulating forms of education policy-making and practice that prioritize interscaler local 'good sense' over neoliberal global 'common sense'. The article closes with examples of interscaler data from a participatory research project on youth orientations to place and sustainability that aims to use practice to generatively examine sustainability education policy.

I don't know if anyone has noticed, but we've switched to using the language of Education for Sustainable Development. (Curriculum Development Manager, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010)

How does the calculated invisibility of neoliberalism work against our capacity to make a critique of it? (Davies & Bansel, 2007)

The consequences of 'common sense' neoliberalism for contemporary social and environmental conditions surround us and implicate us, yet too often lack articulation and critique. Through better understanding neoliberalism's history and ongoing role in national social policies and global institutional structures, its effects on local educational policies and practices become more visible and accessible to possible resistance. This article addresses the effects of neoliberalism as it operates through global and local educational policy, and in particular in relation to the United Nations' Education for Sustainable Development initiatives. It examines how a politics of scale is necessary in enabling critique and in rearticulating forms of education policy-making and practice that prioritize interscaler local 'good sense' over neoliberal global 'common sense'. The article closes with an example of interscaler data from a participatory project on youth orientations to place and sustainability that aims to use practice to critically and generatively examine sustainability education policy.

The Emergence of Global Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism builds on a western trajectory of cultural norms and practices, including hierarchical dualisms of individual over social, human over environment, and industrialized or 'developed' over non-industrialized. However, its emergence as a particular practiced economic theory is typically traced to the breakdown of the Keynesian state in the 1970s. The latter developed post World War II as an attempt to avoid a recurrence of the depression era conditions of the 1930s, and sought to balance state and market with a focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of citizens via public systems such as health care and education. Initiated through the post-war

Bretton Woods agreements and the establishment of international bodies such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), various formations of Keynesian nation states emerged in Europe, North America, Japan, South America, and elsewhere through the 1950s and 1960s. With free trade encouraged and anchored by the US dollar, this system operated under the umbrella protection of US military power (Harvey, 2005).

By the end of the 1960s, with anti-war, civil rights, second wave feminist, student, and other social movements coming to a head, a range of fiscal crises contributed to the breakdown of the Keynesian state and initiated the turn to neoliberal policy (Katz, 2004). Based on ideas of American political philosopher Friedrich von Hayek in the late 1940s and developed in think tanks through the 1950s and 1960s, neoliberalism moved into academic and political prominence in the mid-1970s, and significantly in 1979 with the election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and the institution of new Federal Reserve Bank policy in the USA. The US election of Ronald Regan in 1980 accelerated the then under-way movement towards deregulation, tax cuts, and dismantling of trade unions. From there, there began the broader global movement towards neoliberalization, with its convergence as a new orthodoxy through the articulation of the 'Washington Consensus' in the 1990s - a term coined to describe the collective economic policies of the Washington-based institutions of the World Bank, the IMF, and the US Treasury Department. American involvement in state restructurings (e.g. Chile in the 1970s, Iraq in the 1990s), further suggests the role of US power in particular in the rapid uptake of neoliberal state forms around the globe from the mid-1970s on (Harvey, 2010).

The 'neoliberal' label used by early adherents linked neoliberalism's foundations with the principles of neoclassical economic liberalism from the second half of the nineteenth century. Olssen and Peters (2005) outline these shared core principles as including (i) a view of individuals as rational optimizers of their own economic self-interests; (ii) an emphasis on free-market economics as the most efficient and morally superior way to allocate resources and opportunities; (iii) a commitment to a laissez-faire approach to market self-regulation versus regulation via government intervention; and iv) a commitment to free trade without tariffs, subsidies, fixed exchange rates, or other state-imposed measures. However, differences also exist between the two, including a conception within neoliberalism that the state still has a role in creating the conditions, laws, and institutions necessary for its operations; as well as in conceptualizing the individual, not only as autonomous and free, but also as an enterprising competitive entrepreneur (Olssen & Peters, 2005). These two aspects work together to create quite highly regulated circumstances (through, for example, techniques of auditing, accounting, and performance), while at the same time furthering discourses and expectations of citizens as autonomous, active entrepreneurs of the self (Davies & Bansel, 2007). This shift from an explicit emphasis on role of government to the current neoliberal emphasis on self-regulation and responsibility has been articulated as a shift towards the more implicit 'governance' of populations (e.g. Miller & Rose, 2008). The implications of such now-embedded discourses of meritocracy and of the inevitability of the market in determining human experience impact 'not only on the terms in which subjects are governed, but also the terms in which they understand and articulate themselves, their lives, their opportunities and desires' (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 253). The ambitions and practices of government thus become obscured through the development of 'common sense' understandings, which are in fact based in particular cultural and political histories and trajectories. The effect of this has been that today, in many parts of the world, neoliberalism has come to be seen as a necessary, and even 'natural', way of operating (Harvey, 2005).

Geographers in particular also emphasize the explicit spatialization of capitalism, including in its current neoliberal forms. In addition to the characteristics already outlined, a universal system of private property is also central to the tenets and interventions of neoliberalism. The control and privatization of territory has long been central to colonial projects, with neoliberalism's version of this involving mandated privatization through global institutional policies and interventions (Hall, 2010). As Harvey (2010) writes, 'The failure of neoliberals to imagine the consequences of imposing private property rights and monetized market institutions on divergent geographical, ecological, and anthropological situations is one of the more astonishing conceits of our time' (p. 55). Harvey (2010) and others suggest that in fact there is no historical substantiation to the notion that private property is a necessary condition for economic sufficiency or poverty alleviation. Indeed, the case can be made that the privatization of property and territory has been a key factor in many places in

creating conditions of economic exclusion, dependency, and collapse (Sassen, 2006; Coulthard, 2010; Hall, 2010).

With neoliberalism and the shift from a central emphasis on government at the level of the nation state to more dispersed governance networks, it also becomes increasingly clear that these networks operate at a range of scales (Katz, 2004). With the downshifting of responsibility and accountability to the level of individuals and communities, there comes a potentially problematic localization of politics (or lack thereof) (Fortier, 2010). At the same time that 'action' is constructed as localized and individualized, this local is ever more embedded within global policies, institutions, and flows of media, migration, marketization, and even theory (Connell, 2007; Sassen, 2007). These flows are clearly uneven across the globe, with particular trajectories and effects (Smith, 1984). As Olssen and Peters (2005) point out, globalization is a broader phenomenon than neoliberalism, in that it would still have emerged as a significant condition through advances in technology and science even if neoliberalism had not replaced the Keynesian state as the dominant economic system. They warn that neoliberalism should not be confused with globalization. However, it is also clear that neoliberalism has certainly taken up globalization as both method and outcome, such as through the policies and effects of the Washington Consensus and associated World Bank, IMF, and United Nations activities.

Neoliberalism and Global Educational Policy

As Massey (2005) outlines compellingly, one of the critical maneuvers at work in the globalizing practices of neoliberalism involves convincing us of its inevitability. By turning geography into history, or space into time, it becomes common sense that 'other' countries are merely at an earlier stage of development 'in the one and only narrative it is possible to tell' (p. 5). Aligned with this understanding, 'the frameworks of Progress, of Development, of Modernization... all propose scenarios in which the general directions of history, including the future, are known' (p. 11). These imperial assumptions have a much longer history than neoliberal economic theory, and have been core to colonial settlement and assimilation for many centuries, including in educational policies and practices (Willinsky, 1998). They achieved a new legitimacy and power in the twentieth century, however, with the development of multilateral agreements and institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF during the Bretton Woods post-World War I era, and in particular in renditions of this multilateralism as developed under neoliberalism through the 1980s up until today (Sassen, 2006). As Neil Smith (1984) puts it, 'It is not just a question of what capitalism does to geography but rather of what geography can do for capitalism' (p. 4). Simply put, capitalism requires expanding demand in order to enable expanding supply and the growth of capital. New territory provides this demand in the opening up of new markets.

The details of the role of Washington Consensus policies, implemented through the World Bank, the IMF, and the more recent World Trade Organization (WTO) over the past several decades, in creating such 'markets' are well documented and critiqued from a range of perspectives (e.g. Stiglitz, 2002; Sassen, 2006). However, much less critiqued are the associated roles that UN bodies and policies are also playing in furthering global markets for neoliberal economic activity. Despite the critical focus on policies and practices of development in fields such as post-development and post-colonial studies (e.g. Escobar, 2008; Kapoor, 2008), and on manifestations of neoliberalism in national education contexts (e.g. McLeod, 2009), there is still very minimal critique of the underlying assumptions embedded within global UN policy, including educational policy (Shinkshantar, 2008). With moral discourses of 'development' and 'human rights' operating at the level of common sense through global policy to mark a trajectory that follows that of the West, associated cultural assumptions surrounding individualism, industrialization, economic growth, free markets, and institutionalized education have become foundations upon which social and education policies are built in national and regional contexts (Saunders, 2002; Slater, 2003). Indeed, Esteva and Prakash (1998) elaborate upon how the assumptions of economic globalization, human rights, and individualism are working together to further a 'western recolonization' of the majority world.

Basic education is one of the 'rights' that has been identified as necessary to 'global development' and poverty alleviation by the UN. Typically defined as the development of print-

based literacy through institutionalized primary education, as well as through ongoing and adult education, basic education has been agreed upon as a universally desirable goal in international agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were developed in 2000 through the United Nations Millennium Declaration, with all United Nations member states agreeing to achieving by 2015 the eight goals of (i) eradicating extreme hunger and poverty; (ii) achieving universal primary education; (iii) promoting gender equality and empowering women; (iv) reducing child mortality; (v) improving maternal health; (vi) combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (vii) ensuring environmental sustainability; and (viii) developing a global partnership for development. 'Education for All' (EFA) is a UNESCO-specific initiative focused on furthering goals ii and iii of the MDGs. With six of its own goals also to be met by member states by 2015, EFA focuses on compulsory primary education, adult literacy, gender equality in education and literacy, and 'improving all aspects of the quality in education ... especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills' (UNESCO, <http://www.unesco.org/en/efa/efa-goals/> [accessed November 15, 2010]). 'Education for Sustainable Development' is a third UN and UNESCO policy initiative that combines a number of the MDGs, such as basic education, environmental sustainability, and global development. In the UN 'Decade of Education for Sustainable Development', which ends in 2014, a range of development activities and educational policies are also being promoted and undertaken through this rubric, including Education for All (Wals, 2009).

Cartea (2005) suggests that perhaps those from the West should not be the ones 'to question the importance of universalizing access to education – it would be difficult for someone to oppose something that is presented as a basic human right (at least from a western point of view)' (p. 288). However, what needs to be critiqued is not that everyone should have access to quality education, but rather the assumptions of what it should entail, and that it should necessarily be institutionalized, print-based, individualistic, and otherwise promoting western and neoliberal values (Esteva & Prakash, 1998). By not critically examining the specifics of what is done through the support of global initiatives such as Education for All, the 'common sense' embeddedness of these policies and their effects remain unchecked, as does our complicity in them. As a report on the MDGs prepared by Shinkshantar, 'The People's Institute for Rethinking Education and Development' (2008), outlines:

For the most part, the only critiques that have been raised so far revolve around failures related to implementation of the goals. There have been almost no critiques raised about the legitimacy of the MDG framework, or the overall direction in which they seek to take the entire planet. (p. 4)

The same can be said in relation to Education for All initiatives, with Education for Sustainable Development mandates receiving more critique, but usually in relation to the pairing of environment and economy versus embedded understandings of the role of institutionalized education as necessary to economic development (Sauvé et al, 2005). As Munir Fasheh writes in the Shinkshantar (2008) report, 'Like most declarations, MDGs are full of recycled language, repeating perceptions, conceptions, and relations that ignore or rob what people and communities already have ... Universal declarations are a main killer of pluralism' (p. 29). He suggests that '[h]ealing from the belief that [institutionalized] education is the only path to learn, and regaining pluralism as a fundamental value, not only in learning but in all aspects of living, forms the minimum that needs to be done' (p. 29). Some have already made good cases for western policy-makers, educational theorists, and educators 'staying home' and not exporting educational policy and practice elsewhere (Rasmussen, n.d.; Gough, 2009); however, these same conditions and arguments also exist at 'home' in relation to educational policy, wherever that may be, and equally need to be addressed there.

To elaborate upon this and provide an example of how 'universal' mandates for education furthered under global neoliberalism continue to erode more pluralistic possibilities, including in the West, I turn to my current home province of Saskatchewan, Canada. Saskatchewan is one of 13 provinces and territories in Canada, and has a population of 1,046,000 people, including approximately 14% First Nations and Métis, with that proportion expected to rise to 32% by 2045. There are 72 First Nations within Saskatchewan's borders, living within Treaty territories 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10. In addition to Aboriginal communities, the province is home to a range of immigrant and

settler populations, with 7% of current Saskatchewan residents born outside of Canada, and 22% being 'first generation' Canadians (Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2010). Education in the province has been institutionalized in School Districts since the late 1880s, with 20 federally managed Indian Residential schools formally instituted in 1874 and in operation up until the 1990s. Apologies for the assimilation and abuse experienced by Aboriginal students in the Residential schools were offered by the Canadian Prime Minister in 2008, with Truth and Reconciliation Commission activities ongoing (Regan, 2010). Today, 54% of Aboriginal youth are completing institutionalized schooling with less than high school education, compared with 37% in the overall Saskatchewan population (Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2010).

Operating within this historical context, the southern region of the province was designated in 2007 as a United Nations 'Regional Centre for Expertise (RCE) in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)'. As a UN initiative, ESD is aligned with Education for All through promoting the Millennium Development Goals and establishes basic primary education as key to working towards sustainable development (UNESCO, 2008). As part of its mandate, ESD policy also emphasizes the prioritization of 'practices and knowledge embedded in local cultures' (UNESCO, 2009). What is less clear is the vision of how these two objectives will be reconciled. As the recent UNESCO Bonn Declaration (2009) suggests, the imagination of 'local practices and knowledge' is clearly framed within an overall trajectory towards western-style education and economic development. 'Education' is often implicitly understood, and sometimes explicitly defined, as primarily print-based literacy and numeracy. Distinguishing between 'developing and developed countries', the commonsense understandings of the Declaration appear to be that such print-based literacies will contribute to 'development', presumably following a trajectory of those countries already 'developed' (Linder, 2011; Zepke, 2011). Promoted by many well-meaning educationalists, and certainly complicated by decades of economic and educational policies that have left nations and peoples socially and economically impoverished, on a closer look, the basic premises of such Declarations appear to potentially support recolonization via globalizing forms of 'development' and 'education'.

In the province's 2009/2010 annual plan, the Saskatchewan Minister of Education prioritized 'environment, conservation, and sustainability' as a key goal, and since then the Ministry has begun work to actualize that focus across the K-12 curricula (MOE, 2009). This has involved consulting with the local UN RCE in ESD, as well as with the Saskatchewan ESD Working Group, and as the paraphrased comment that leads this article suggests, the Ministry curriculum writing team has recently 'switched to use the language of ESD'. Despite another progressive Ministry of Education priority to include 'Aboriginal content, perspectives, and ways of knowing' across the K-12 curricula (MOE, 2005), as of 2011 there had been little consultation with First Nations and Métis representation in determining how 'environment, conservation, and sustainability' might be more explicitly addressed in K-12 education in the province. A three-day seminar was held in May 2011, organized through a national organization and with national and international speakers highlighted, in order to engage 'educational leaders' across the school divisions in Saskatchewan to 'create a culture of sustainable development integrated into all aspects of the K-12 education system' (SEdA, 2010, p. 4). When asked at a planning meeting about the need to include local expertise and First Nations and Métis perspectives in the highlighted speakers (if not in the planning committee), perhaps well-intentioned but troubling responses included comments such as 'we want to emphasize sameness versus difference – we all want the same thing in sustainability'. Implicit assumptions about what constitutes 'sustainability' as 'the thing we all want' suggest that more support and investigation is needed into how global educational mandates such as Education for Sustainable Development are affecting the ways in which policy and practice are being determined in local contexts, such as Saskatchewan, and, moreover, into how they might be engaged more ethically (Sauvé et al, 2005; McKenzie et al, 2009).

A Politics of Scale in Education

In an edited collection on 'the global politics of educational borrowing and lending', Steiner-Khamsi (2004) asserts that policy borrowing and lending function similar to epidemics and spread exponentially, quickly becoming difficult to trace to their points of origin. She suggests that more

education policy studies ought to focus on how 'globalization' and 'lessons from elsewhere' are being used in justifying the need for educational reform in national or regional contexts (p. 217). Likewise, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that greater attention needs to be given to the ways in which neoliberalism is operating through global policies and recommendations which originate beyond national borders, or often within particular national borders. They comment, 'Most policy research in education continues ... to take the authority of the nation-state as given and assumes that policies are developed within its boundaries' (p. 13). In Canada's case, the jurisdiction for educational policy is provincial versus federal; and thus provincial educational policy and practice is more likely to be the level of analysis (Bray, 1999). While there is a long history of comparative study of education across and within national contexts, a more critical investigation of the politics and ethics of global policy mobility and transfer is still in its early stages (Mawhinney, 2010).

Conventional orientations to policy and policy analysis have privileged legitimated governing bodies and taken an instrumentalist view that conceives of policy as a tool for regulating populations from the top down, with predetermined universal aims. As Nguyễn (2010) writes, this approach includes a problematic assumption of a unitary 'public', and minimizes polyvocality (p. 181). Distinguishing policy development and implementation as distinct phases 'implicitly ratifies a top-down perspective, unnecessarily divides what is in fact a recursive dynamic, and inappropriately widens the gulf between [diverse] everyday practice and government action' (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, cited in Nguyễn, 2010, p. 181). This includes ignoring how places and localized ways of life are constructed relationally at different spatiotemporal scales (Nguyễn, 2010).

Instead, bringing a politics of scale to educational policy entails a more critical examination of the interscaler contexts of policy and related practice. It involves examining the ways in which 'social life is being scaled in new ways' (Mawhinney, 2010, p. 247), including through the globalizing influences of neoliberalism. Instead of an assumption of geography as history, and therefore of 'development' and 'modernization' that follow dominant neoliberal and globalizing trajectories (Massey, 2005), a critical examination of scale opens possibilities for considering alternatives. Scale is meant here in a spatial sense, though with space understood as inseparably interwoven with history and its social manifestations (Massey, 1994). Thus, space is understood as the product of interrelations, a 'simultaneity of stories so far', which is co-constitutive with multiplicity, or difference (Massey, 2005). Rather than scale understood in relation to ever more globalized localities (Friedman, 2005), this suggests an interscaler orientation to space/time, in which the world is viewed as being made through relations, and 'therein lies the politics' (Massey, 2005, p. 4). Or, in other words, '[t]he "role of space" might be characterized as providing the conditions for the existence of those relations which generate time' (Massey, 2005, p. 56). This, then, is space determined in relation to places, their inhabitants, their histories and futures. The types of relationships enacted in places determine how we experience and understand space and how we enact and affect it.

Related to this articulation of a politics of interrelation via a politics of scale, Sassen (2007) suggests that a focus on place 'allows us to unbundle globalization in terms of the multiple specialized cross-border circuits on which different types of places are located' (p. 20). Like Massey, she advocates for attending to the 'multiplicity of presences' in place/space – political, cultural, economic, and subjective. Thus, multiple trajectories are woven through and across places, disallowing the possibility of any easy separation of 'local' and 'global', as well as any sense of a particular inevitable future via neoliberal globalization or otherwise. Indeed, some have suggested that the distinction between local and global has become so porous in the context of globalization as to be questionable, certainly as a stable categorization (Kaiser & Nikiforova, 2008).

Appadurai's (1996) conceptualization of vernacular cosmopolitanism is one way of articulating the ability of particular populations to actively respond to globalizing pressures, including those of neoliberalism – to be context generative as well as context produced. This capacity to be locally responsive and outwardly generative, and potentially resistant, can be understood in relation to the relative positioning of nations within global politics, but also at smaller scales in connection with the strategic use of memory and imagination. A growing range of work examines the latter in the context of the maintenance and shifting of local Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (e.g. Smith, 1999; Kostogriz & Tsolidis, 2008; Shava, 2008; Siodmak, 2008), as well as in tracing the identities and points of strengths of transnational migrant and diasporic communities (e.g. Mirón et al, 2005; Francisco, 2008; Mawhinney, 2010).

Of particular interest for sustainability and education are the ways in which collective memory is being recovered and imagined in order to enable strengthened relationships with particular cultures and places, despite globalization's assimilative effects. In considering memory and forgetting as colonizing tools, memory can be understood as a site of cultural change and nation, or post-nation, building (Ricoeur, 2004). However, as lived and contested in specific places and times, memories are also locations of defense against normalization and assimilation, and sites of possible counter-memory (Legg, 2007). Many have discussed 'nostalgia', or an active return to past orientations to culture or place, as a defense mechanism in times of accelerated change and neoliberal globalization. However, in current contexts, the extent of possible homogeneity within any cultural group also comes into question, or, as Legg (2007) writes, 'collective memory must be dereified and viewed as a product of individual and institutional memories, as well as their precursor' (p. 459). Also, the effects of history on memory are uncertain - for example, in terms of what is recounted as 'traditional' while initially introduced through colonization (Wilson, 2010). To the extent that nostalgia is operating strategically in Indigenous or diasporic contexts, it may be doing so in more nuanced and complicated ways. As Rizvi (2009) comments, such communities still 'score by being able to interrogate the universal with the particular and by being able to use their cosmopolitanism to press the limits of the local' (p. 209). A range of other alternative approaches suggest that some blending or hybridity of the global and local is inevitable in most contemporary contexts, and propose that this blending be, as much as possible, monitored, examined, and driven by local communities and cultures. This refocusing on the local, within a realization of global influences and possibilities, is the realm of the so-called glocal, or vernacular cosmopolitanism, in which the global is responded to, and affected, in culturally specific and localized ways (Diouf, 2000; Pollock, 2000).

In educational scholarship and practice concerned with environment and sustainability and published in English, there is a noticeable increase in work engaging in these issues in just the past few years, more often in relation to Indigenous knowledge and populations. For example, recent papers by Breidlid (2009), Mueller and Bentley (2009), and Takano et al (2009), researching contexts in Southern Africa, Ghana, and Alaska, all examine the implications and possibilities of memory and traditional knowledge in relation to learning and orientations to sustainability. Breidlid (2009), as well as Down and Nurse (2007) writing in a Caribbean context, examine in particular the tension and flows between local knowledge and global pressures, including those of international educational policy and practices. They offer critical views on the importance of cultural memory in enabling 'context generation' in a global context (Appadurai, 1996). Or, as Down and Nurse (2007) write, 'Without narratives of initial subjectivities, the in-between space will simply be a place of loss for most' (p. 189), with cultural loss also often meaning a loss of relationships with and knowledge about places, the more than human, and related community practices (Rasmussen & Akulukjuk, 2009).

The Interscaler Local and Education Policy: towards resistance

This returns us to the example of the Saskatchewan context, and concerns that UN-endorsed policies such as Education for Sustainable Development and Education for All contribute to and maintain cultural loss through education, in a province and country already so marked by colonization (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Paquette & Fallon, 2010). In Saskatchewan, as in so many other places around the world, in order to enable ethical educational policy and practice that is not imposed on but driven by local histories and diverse possible futures, the embedded logic of neoliberal globalization must be made visible and thus possible to critique. Rather than an assumed global 'common sense', this requires local 'good sense' enabled through a more careful exploration of the interscaler relationships of people to place/space. An interscaler history of place becomes essential, as does examining relationships with and across other places.

Katz (2004) proposes the idea of 'countertypographies' as a way of invoking 'the connections among particular historical geographies by virtue of their relationships to a specific abstract social process or relation such as restructuring or deskilling' (p. xiv). She suggests that new political formations can thus be mobilized along 'counter lines' of that typography, connecting particular places and 'revealing the intertwined consequences' of neoliberal globalization in ways that

demand a different politics (p. xiv). Or, as Sassen (2007) puts it, 'noncosmopolitan globalities' form through politics focused on local issues and struggles shared by other localities, enabling a 'multiscaler politics of the local' (p. 207). Rather than a time-space compression that forces globalization on the local, Katz (2004) suggests that this enables a time-space expansion that can strengthen local capacity for alternative futures. Discussing the 'three R's' of resilience, reworking, and resistance, Katz (2004) suggests a trajectory towards a coming to consciousness that 'denaturalizes that which appears given and exposes the enormous work involved in making the world of appearances seem permanent and natural' (p. 257).

When one hears those determining provincial educational policy around sustainability articulate a 'we' that supposedly shares a vision for a sustainable future in Saskatchewan, and when national and international educators are planned to be flown in to inform that vision and how to implement it, it seems that some further interscaler local good sense is required. Rather than an Education for All that appears to implicitly promote globalized assumptions about the directions of the future, how might Saskatchewan, as well as other local contexts, better determine what 'practices and knowledge embedded in local cultures' could actually mean in relation to ESD? More broadly, as others have pointed out, what are the strategic benefits versus losses of aligning with such a global policy mandate in the first place (Gruenewald, 2004; Sauvé et al, 2005)? And how can we guard against such mandates merely serving to further neoliberal 'development' under a gloss of sustainability (Hirsch & Henderson, 2011)? As a partial response, one way forward seems to be undertaking interscaler histories of a place and gathering data to engage in countertypographies with other places facing similar issues (e.g. Breidlid, 2009).

To that end, in Saskatchewan a university-community collaboration has developed to work with diverse youth in relation to their orientations to place and sustainability, with implications for education sustainability policy and practice. 'The Digital Media Project: youth making place' developed as a collaboration among participating youth, community organizers, university researchers, and community organizations, including the Core Neighborhood Youth Coop, Paved Arts, the Cru Wellness Centre, and the Open Door Society of Saskatoon. It ran as a pilot in 2011, with a central focus on the engagement and learning of local youth in developing their digital media skills, 'having a voice on local-global community issues important to them', and exploring their own identity in relation to place and sustainability.

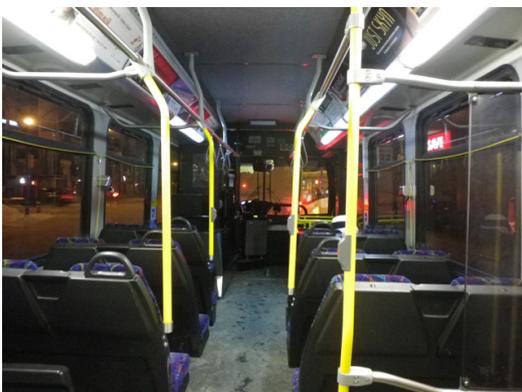
A second aim particularly relevant to the focus of this article is to bring the research data, collected with youth in the form of interviews, group discussions, map making, photography and film, to bear in considering sustainability education policy and practice locally and globally. In particular, the study focuses on Aboriginal, new immigrant, and settler youth orientations to place and sustainability, and asks: what do the 'local practices and knowledge' of the ESD Bonn Declaration (UNESCO, 2009) mean in a province where 14% of the total population is Aboriginal, with an anticipated 40% Aboriginal K-12 student population in the province by 2020 (MacKay, 2005); where at least 1000 new immigrants arrive each year, totaling approximately 8% of the documented population (Chirkov & Geres, 2007); and where increasing settler youth of European ancestry are relocating to urban environments due to the reduction of family farming in this historically rural province? What do 'local practices and knowledge' entail in a historical context of migration, displacement, and assimilation, and strengthening of both neoliberal globalization and local and translocal communities and traditions? And in particular, what do they mean to contemporary youth, who live within and across these categories and circumstances, and who are or will be the targets of K-12 environmental education policies and practices? Rather than top-down approaches to educational policy implementation, we are interested in how we can gather 'bottom-up' data to help inform understandings of what might constitute interscaler local good sense here in Saskatchewan.

For the pilot study, 14 Aboriginal and new immigrant youth met voluntarily for three hours a week for 12 weeks, with weekly workshops facilitated by a filmmaker and Executive Director of the local community organization which hosted the project (Marcel Petit), a youth community organizer (Jeh Custer), and a university researcher (the author of this article). Workshop topics included 'Identity, Place, and Storytelling'; 'Political Uses of Thought and Media'; 'Photography and Community/Sustainability'; 'Mapping Community Places'; 'Storytelling through Photos and Film'; 'Visiting a Local Aboriginal Film Production Company'; and 'Technical Aspects of Photography, Filming, and Editing'. A second filmmaker (Clark Ferguson) worked individually

with the youth at later stages on the planning, shooting, and editing of their final film projects. The photographs and films created by the youth on themes of place and sustainability issues were screened in April 2011 at a public event, which also featured performance works and hip hop by participating youth and their friends. The digital media work is also available, at <http://www.youtube.com/user/digitalmediaproject1>.

The collated and analyzed data will aim to provide context to what 'local knowledge and practices' mean for participating youth in relation to sustainability and educational policy in the province, as well as across other locations. The initial work on topics such as identity and place, Treaty history and implications, alcoholism, racism and immigration, homelessness, water access and pollution, and connection to natural settings provides powerful counternarratives to neoliberal expectations of individualized responsibility, free market growth, and 'sustainable development' (see, for example, Figures 1-8). In a provincial context characterized by the right-leaning Saskatchewan Party leadership, and a national context of a Conservative Party majority government, the 'common-sense' assumptions of globalizing forms of neoliberalism are highly active, if not always explicitly visible, in decisions to cut funding or in the provision of public services such as education or broadcasting, privatized resource extraction, such as tar sands development and uranium mining. Within these contexts, the slippage from an emphasis on 'environment, conservation, and sustainability' to 'education for sustainable development' at the level of provincial educational policy seems worryingly comfortable and easy. As a 'floating signifier' (González-Gaudiano, 2005), 'education for sustainable development' can demark environmental sustainability for some, while very comfortably maintaining a neoliberal trajectory of individualism, free market economics, and continued western style development. At its worst, it can result in the greenwashing of business as usual. The work of the Digital Media Project youth participants suggests how research data can help make visible some of these embedded assumptions and the ways that neoliberal versions of 'economic sustainability' rub up against sustainability considered on ecological and social scales. Rather than a policy trajectory approach that traces policy from its development to its implementation (Ball, 1997), this project instead attempts to use practice to critically examine educational policy.

Concerned with the potential slippage and assumptions of ESD as educational policy in Saskatchewan and globally, we are gathering together thick description which we hope to piece together with work in other locations in ways that better enable critical policy analysis in sustainability education. These research data indicate, as Katz (2004) suggests, the 'multiplicity of presences' in place/space – political, cultural, economic, and subjective – which are woven through and across other places as well. New political formations can be engaged along the 'counter lines' of that typography, connecting particular places and 'revealing the intertwined consequences' of neoliberal globalization in ways that demand a different politics (p. xiv). This is the 'multiscalar politics of the local' (Sassen, 2007) that is providing ways forward in a range of domains and social movements, and that also holds promise for more critical and generative critical policy studies in sustainability education.





Figures 1-8. Digital Media Project youth photos on place and sustainability.

Photo credits: Ashley Spyglass, Vanessa McNab, Brooke Thompson, Zaida Johnson, Angela Black, Lillian Desjarlais, Zondra Roy, Jack Saddleback, Colter Ahpay, Kamwee Fournier, Hazel Taytaya, Micka David, Ransell Ramos, Isaih Ronquillo.

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